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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000529

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [LH](#)
SUBJECT: GOL CONSIDERING FUTURE NRF CONTRIBUTIONS; TAPPED
OUT FOR CURRENT CYCLE

REF: SECSTATE 89347

Classified By: Pol/econ officer Traver Gudie for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) We delivered reftel points urging additional pledges to the NATO Response Force (NRF) to Undersecretary of Defense Renatas Norkus on June 6. Norkus told us he appreciates the recently announced U.S. contributions to "rescue" the NRF and agreed that all allies will have to contribute more to reach and sustain full operational capacity. He said, nonetheless, that funding constraints will prevent Lithuania from contributing additional troops or capabilities to the current NRF cycle. The Ministry will, however, consider NRF contributions for later rotations (NRF 9-14). Norkus said that Lithuania will likely offer approximately 50 Special Operations Force personnel for NRF 10, and may be able to continue to offer other capabilities, such as mine countermeasures and water purification, for future NRF rotations.

¶2. (C) Norkus noted that Lithuania will contribute capabilities to NRF in accordance with the Ministry of National Defense long-term plan for modernization. Lithuania will not accelerate or modify its defense modernization plans, but will make capabilities available to the NRF as the MOD develops them within the limitations of the budget. Norkus stressed that Lithuania believes strongly in long-term defense planning and will be as flexible as possible to meet Alliance needs, but also must attempt to follow a methodical plan for defense development and modernization to best forecast and allocate funds for Lithuania's defense priorities. He added that Minister Kirkilas will make this point to Secretary Rumsfeld if asked at the NATO Defense Ministerial on June 8.

¶3. (C) We pointed out that the GOL's continued failure to appropriate two percent of GDP for defense spending was handicapping Lithuania's ability to meet this NATO need. Norkus said that the Ministry will continue to petition the new Lithuanian government and Parliament to raise defense spending by 0.05% of GDP annually to reach the NATO target of at least 2%. We noted that Lithuania anticipates defense spending at 1.22% of GDP in 2007, and underscored that a downward trend after a year of stagnation at 1.27% is movement in the wrong direction. Norkus responded that the Ministry's budget proposals will peg spending at around 1.32% of GDP, but that ultimately the budget is in the Parliament's hands.

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